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Ministry of Forests and Range

BRITISH COLUMBIA SENDS WILDFIRE EXPERTS TO GREECE

VANCOUVER – Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman today announced that the Province is sending a team of specialists in wildfire and reforestation to help Greece rebuild after the devastating fires it experienced this summer.

"British Columbians understand the terrible devastation caused by wildfires," Coleman said. "We have over 100 years of experience in fighting and responding to wildfires, and are pleased to share this expertise with Greece to help them reforest and rebuild."

The delegation is sponsored by the charitable Stavros Niarchos Foundation, which is hosting a five-day workshop in Athens so local authorities can gain access to Canadian expertise in wildfire management and economic development. The co-ordination of the Canadian delegation is being managed by Dr. André Gerolymatos, chair of Hellenic Studies at Simon Fraser University's School for International Studies.

"I am delighted that SFU's Hellenic Studies program is taking this important step in the humanitarian and redevelopment efforts required to address the devastating fires of last summer," said SFU president Michael Stevenson. "This project speaks to SFU's strategic interest in Greece, and to our broader commitment to 'thinking of the world'."

The 23-member delegation will include members of Simon Fraser University's Hellenic studies and resource and environmental management departments, staff from B.C.'s Ministry of Forests and Range, Natural Resources Canada - Canadian Forest Service, the University of Arizona, the U.S. Geological Survey - Western Ecological Research Centre, and a number of private-sector companies.

British Columbia is sending nine forestry staff to help assess the damage, offer advice on reforestation, and make recommendations on fire prevention preparedness techniques, fire fighting and fire controlling procedures.

Since the early 1990s, B.C.'s wildfire protection program has participated in international co-operation projects in more than 30 countries in Europe, Australia, Asia, Africa and Central and Latin America. Developing relationships with the global fire management community also helps to build B.C.'s own expertise and knowledge.

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation is online at: www.SNFoundation.org.

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